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**Wolf, Anne Marie. Juan de Segovia and the Fight for Peace:
Christians and Muslims in the Fifteenth Century**

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de pédagogie, il raconte aussi son auteur. Chrétien d'origine juive, Vives vit l'Inquisition espagnole décimer sa famille et dut fuir en France, puis en Angleterre et aux Pays-Bas à la recherche d'un havre de paix. Cette existence singulière, faite d'arrachements, de renonciation, mais aussi de tolérance envers l'altérité et de foi dans le savoir, explique profondément ces pages habitées, enflammées par la conviction que le savoir et l'enseignement peuvent rendre l'homme plus avisé et meilleur. Espérons que la publication simultanée aux Belles Lettres de cette traduction du *De Disciplinis* et de la biographie intellectuelle fondatrice en langue française de Carlos Norena par Olivier et Justine Pédeflous participent à l'accomplissement de ce vœu humaniste.

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Wolf, Anne Marie.

Juan de Segovia and the Fight for Peace: Christians and Muslims in the Fifteenth Century.

History, Languages, and Cultures of the Spanish and Portuguese Worlds. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014. Pp. xi, 375. ISBN 978-0-268-04425-1 (paperback) \$45.

Over the past few decades, medieval Spain has been discovered to be a rich source of untapped material and under-studied figures for historians of medieval Europe and the Mediterranean. Anne Marie Wolf's *Juan de Segovia and the Fight for Peace: Christians and Muslims in the Fifteenth Century* shows that even after nearly half a century of scholarly Hispanophilia, there remain important figures languishing in academic obscurity. One of these is Juan de Segovia, Cardinal and conciliarist, missionary and moderate. Juan's career straddled two worlds: the narrow confines of the Roman Curia and the wide expanse of Islam. He grew up amid the cosmopolitan diversity of late medieval Castile, but his base of operations became an isolated parish tucked in the corner of the Swiss Alps. He is one of those figures who pops up in the course of larger narratives, but who has not until now been the subject of a dedicated study. For Wolf, Juan deserves to be more than a mere footnote, and thus she has set out to study his life and career.

Wolf's book combines a chronological and thematic approach in five chapters, progressing from Juan's obscure origins in Segovia to his time at the Council of Basel (1431–49) and on to his contemplative seclusion in Ayton. Arguments regarding Juan's "fight for peace"—aimed at both Christians and Muslims—are woven throughout: his efforts to bring peace to a fatally-schismatic Catholic Church, notably through his energetic but ultimately unsuccessful lobbying at Basel; his "fight for peace" with Islam (even less successful than his battle against Christian fractiousness) which consisted in an approach to missionizing that emphasized measured, rational argument. This model had fallen somewhat out of fashion since the late-thirteenth century, and Juan is remarkable not only for continuing to bear the standard of moderation, but for commissioning a new translation of the Qur'an, carried out with the collaboration of an Islamic jurist from Spain, Yça Gidelli. The translation has been lost, but the preface has survived.

Chapter 1, "The Years at the University of Salamanca," provides the background for Juan's particular approach to the Church and to Islam. It was as a student and professor of theology at Salamanca that his intellectual character was formed. Here, he was exposed to the work of rationalist Franciscan philosophers, while at the same time being drawn into the cut-throat world of institutional politics, lobbying to defend the university's autonomy.

Chapter 2, "Contacts, Conversations, and Conversion," sketches out the context of Christian-Muslim relations in the Iberian Peninsula of Juan's youth. This was the age of charismatic preachers, notably Vicent Ferrer, and of aggressive missionizing, as reflected in the Disputations of Tortosa. Although much more energy and anxiety were directed at Jews, interest in converting Muslims—at least foreign ones—remained. Hence, in the 1430s, Juan, who was now serving in Castilian diplomatic entourages, began to seek out learned Muslims from Granada with whom he could debate.

The third chapter, "The Basel Years," reviews Juan's instrumental role at the Council—a conclave overshadowed by preoccupations with the threat of the Ottoman Turks in the East, and the proto-Reforming Hussites in the North—in which he served as the leader of the "conciliar party." In the end, politics and the succession of an unsympathetic Eugene IV led to the collapse of the Council; yet the experience was crucial to Juan's development. It was the Council's successful moderation of the Hussite issue—through compromise—that convinced him it was only through the abandonment of force and

the medium of dialogue that both the Greek and the Muslim problems could be solved.

This lays the groundwork for the final two chapters, “Converting Fellow Christians” and “Converting Muslims,” in which Wolf explores Juan’s approach to the problem of Islam. In chapter 4 she outlines his radical opposition to the use of force against Muslims, contextualizing it both terms of fellow pacifists (or near-pacifists) and rationalists like Ramon Llull, Roger Bacon, and Nicolas de Cusa (with whom he corresponded), and in the contemporary atmosphere of exuberant enthusiasm for crusading and increasing reaction against Ottoman expansion. In the fifth chapter, the author considers Juan’s recommendations for the conversion of Muslims—one that reflects the same naïve, self-assurance that his predecessors exhibited, and boils down to the notion that if only Muslims (whom he believed to be fundamentally rational and well-intentioned) could be brought into peaceful dialogue with Christians, they would see the error of their faith and willingly embrace the truth of Catholicism.

As the epilogue admits, Juan was a man out of step with his own times. The princes of his age, both secular and lay, had no interest in evangelizing Muslims and every interest in waging war against them. And so, he vanished quickly into obscurity. Few of his works were ever printed or edited, and fewer still have been translated (although Wolf provides a sampling of excerpts in the short appendix that follows the epilogue). But, of course, what Juan de Segovia failed to realize (like so many historians and policy-makers today) is that religious struggles rarely are what they seem; religion serves as an expression of structures of power and interest that often have nothing to do with the Divine and everything to do with the material world—the ambitions, avarice, and lust for power that would be little served by the sort of peace and concord that Juan aspired to. Wolf deserves credit for tackling with admirable thoroughness and insight this obscure and complex personality, and for shedding further light on the complex currents of religious thought that characterized the Christian West at a time of increasing anxiety and conflict with Muslims, both at home and abroad.

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